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2000 Report on the World Social Situation: overview

1. The *2000 Report on the World Social Situation* is the fifteenth in a series of reports on the subject dating since 1952. The main purpose of the series is to provide a succinct, periodic summary of global developments seen from a social perspective. The following paragraphs contain an overview, for the use of the Economic and Social Council, of the main trends and developments in these subject areas. The full report will be issued later in the year as a United Nations sales publication.

2. The *2000 Report* is divided into six chapters. Chapter I (Reproduction and production) reviews demographic and economic trends. In chapter II (Institutional framework), the focus of discussion is on current changes in society affecting and affected by the situation of families, social groups, civil society and a range of public institutions. In chapter III (Trends in living conditions: a mixed record of achievement), trends in living conditions and the availability of basic services are described, giving particular attention to how these differ across countries and among different social groups or income strata within countries. In chapter IV (Social pathologies), the focus is on a selected number of social problems or pathologies of special contemporary concern, including discrimination, armed conflicts, violence in various forms, corruption and crime. Chapter V (Education, technology, information: commanding aspects of social change) assesses the continued impact on societies and groups within society of developments in the triad of education, information and technology, which are assuming an ever-greater influence on the welfare of countries and social groups. In chapter VI (Old issues, new challenges: equity and ethical implications), a number of developments are identified which are expected to have a profound influence on the shape of society in the coming years and decades, radically affecting life in many dimensions in far-reaching and fundamental ways. How societies, through individual and collective efforts, both public and private, will respond to the challenges posed by these developments will also be crucial in shaping the future. The main themes and conclusions of the six chapters of the *2000 Report* are set out below.

I. Reproduction and production

3. Several demographic landmarks were reached at around the turn of the millennium, with the world's population surpassing six billion, having doubled in roughly one generation, that is since about 1960.

4. Ageing has become a global phenomenon, with the median age in sub-Saharan Africa, the subregion with the youngest population, and despite the heavy toll from human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) related deaths, rising for the first time. In developing countries as a group the median age reached 24 years, having increased five years since its low point in 1975. The

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median age in more developed countries stood at 37 years, an increase of 8 years since 1960. Globally, the population aged 80 years or older reached 70 million. In developed countries, the 60 and over age group for the first time exceeded the under 15 age group. Life expectancy at birth increased globally; the gap between the developing region and the more developed regions narrowed considerably, from 22 years in favour of the developed regions in 1960 to less than 12 in 2000. The corresponding gap in the life expectancy for women narrowed from 24 to about 14 years, and for men from 20 to about 9 years. Globally, the gender gap in life expectancy increased from 3 to 4 years in favour of women.

5. The rate of growth of world population continues to slow down and has now reached an annual rate of 1.2 per cent (1.4 per cent in developing and 0.4 per cent in more developed regions). The continuing decline in fertility is the single factor behind the slowdown. At the world level, the number of children born to each woman has fallen over a generation from just under 5 to just under 3 (from 6 to 3 in developing and from 2.7 to 1.6 in more developed regions). The number of countries with a level at or below 2.1 children per woman has reached 61, with a combined population of 2.6 billion, or 44 per cent of the global population. Many countries in Europe are about to experience decline in their populations.

6. The global distribution of population has changed markedly. Developing regions are now the home of 80 per cent of the global population, an increase from 70 per cent in 1960. Population density in these regions more than doubled in this period, from 25 to 59 persons per square kilometre (km^2), compared to an increase from 17 to 25 persons per km^2 in more developed regions. Substantial population movements have occurred both within and between countries. Urban areas now account for 48 per cent of the global population (40 per cent in developing regions) as against 34 per cent (22 per cent in developing regions) in 1960. The number of towns and cities with a population of one million or more increased from 112 to 372 in this period and those with a population of five million or more from 14 to 45. The number of people residing in countries other than the country of their birth increased from under 75 million in 1960 to some 125 million in 2000, but remained fairly constant as a proportion of the global population at about 2.2 per cent.

7. Dynamic economies capable of generating the goods and services necessary for meeting the basic needs of all people and expanding opportunities for productive work are the material base in which social progress is rooted. While an expanding economy does not itself signify social progress nor indeed an improvement in the general welfare, without such expansion little progress can be made in lifting standards of living and releasing millions of people from the daily struggle for survival.

8. The experience of recent years and indeed recent decades has been that countries with the narrowest economic base, as measured by average per capita income, have also by and large proved to be the least dynamic, with the result that an already wide gap has become a chasm between them and the economically most developed countries. At the global level, the situation at the end of the 1990s was marked by a sharp setback for the economies of developing countries (reflecting the East Asian financial crisis) followed by partial recovery; economic stagnation following a half-decade of slumping output in the countries in transition in Eastern Europe and the former USSR; and strong growth in North America, moderate growth in West Europe and near a standstill in the world's second largest economy, Japan.

9. During the decade of the 1990s taken as a whole, the economies of developing countries expanded on a per capita measure faster than in the previous decade (by 1.9 per cent as against 0.3 per cent per annum) and somewhat faster than the developed countries in the 1990s (1.5 per cent). The latter, conversely, grew faster in the 1980s (2.3 per cent) than in the 1990s (1.5 per cent), and also faster then than the developing countries. As a result, the per capita income gap between the two groups widened in the 1980s and narrowed in the 1990s. Over the period of two decades, the average income per head in developing countries as a fraction of that of developed countries fell slightly from just over one twentieth to just under one twentieth. In the same period, among developing countries per capita economic output contracted substantially in Africa and also but less markedly, in the least developed countries. In contrast, growth of output in East and South Asia, particularly in China, stayed well ahead of the growth of population, with the result that the gap in terms of per capita output between East and South Asia and that of the developed countries narrowed considerably, from about 50:1 at

the beginning of the 1980s to about 30:1 at the end of the 1990s, while the gap between the output of Africa and that of the developed countries widened dramatically, from 25:1 to 40:1. The per capita output of Africa in relation to that of East and South Asia had been better than 2:1 in favour of Africa in the early 1980s; it is now some one third below. In transition countries, per capita output also fell, by some 40 per cent, which was even faster than in Africa, but starting from a very much higher level.

10. This diversity of performance among national economies occurred in a period of profound change in the global economic environment. The world economy at the end of the 1990s was radically different from that of the early 1980s. The market model had quite clearly triumphed over the command model as the organizing principle for national economic management; economies were more open and correspondingly also more vulnerable to external shocks, especially in the case of the weakest; foreign capital flowed more freely but the flows were both geographically more concentrated (to the disadvantage of poorer economies with fewer prospects) and more volatile; the public sector receded before the private sector in an increasing number of countries, and in this context public capital flows contracted, again skewing the flow of global capital against the weaker economies. The structure of both consumption and production underwent fundamental change, with services gaining relative to agriculture and industrial production; a vast range of new products came on the market as a consequence of the exploitation of past accumulated scientific and technological innovations; methods of production underwent a revolution in key sectors, with machines replacing people, geographic relocation of production facilities and major reorganization of corporate structures and methods of management among other changes of significance. Inflation has been fought vigorously and largely brought under control in most countries, to the immediate advantage of poorer strata of the population in many instances but arguably, at the expense of overall economic growth, at least in the medium term; fiscal deficits were eliminated or substantially reduced, with gains resulting from the greater confidence of capital markets and from reduced inflation needing to be balanced against the implicit cost of reduced public services, including social programmes, as well as the direct harm to displaced public sector employees.

11. Adjustments and sacrifices have been made by countries in order to position themselves to cope more effectively with the challenges of the next century and to take advantage of new opportunities. Clearly, not all countries, and within countries not all population groups, will be successful in such an endeavour, as in the past. There is a clear danger that the experience of globalization of the early twentieth century will be repeated, when "modern" enclaves came into being all around the world integrated in a global economy, while the "back country" was left to drift outside the mainstream of "progress".

II. Institutional framework

12. The family, in various configurations, has withstood many challenges from utopian visionaries, despots and totalitarian States of various kinds. Its survival as the basic unit of socialization and provision of support and its ability to regenerate itself in new circumstances are testimony to the resilience and continued relevance in the contemporary world of this ancient institution. The impulse to form new families while divorce is on the increase and many young people in all parts of the world postpone marriage continues to be strong even as the traditional definitions of family are undergoing change. Attempts to legitimize non-traditional forms of "family" may be seen as a further acknowledgement of the importance of public commitment to the reciprocal obligations that entering a family bond implies, rather than a challenge to the idea of family. At the same time, in recent decades the family has undergone a transformation that is both rapid and profound, affecting its size and structure, the relationships among its members, and its role within the wider community and society at large.

13. The most striking change is the dramatic reduction in the size of the representative nuclear family. In the span of a single generation, the number of children in a typical family has fallen to 3 in developing and 1.6 in more developed countries, as against 6 and 2.7 a generation earlier. One consequence of such a rapid transformation is that in the future the number of close relatives in more families will fall with each generation, so that progressively fewer persons will have close living relatives. This will be further reinforced where there has been massive desertion by fathers of their families or where the incidence of single parenthood is large or where human

immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) is rampant. At the same time, with life expectancy continuing to increase, there will be more three-, four-, and even five-generation families. The world has little experience of such a simultaneous rise in the number of persons living alone with no close relatives and in the number of multigenerational families, and how to cope with their varied needs.

14. The family's role as an economic unit of production has been declining, with its significance now largely confined to small-scale agriculture, trade, handicrafts and personal services, especially in developing countries. The family has remained, however, a key institutional arrangement for providing support and care to members, especially including the young and old, infirm and disabled, on a reciprocal basis, without expectation of immediate reward. While the system of support and care survives, it is in constant danger of erosion by demographic, economic and social forces. Besides the shrinking of kin-networks and the decline in the importance of family as a productive unit, greater physical distance among family members, separation of families due to armed conflict, family dissolution through abandonment and divorce, and even the eligibility criteria for assistance from government agencies are among the factors that continue to reduce the capacity of the family to offer high-quality, continuous support and care.

15. An important development in the internal dynamics of family life in recent years has been the move to recognize more explicitly and often in law the rights of individual family members. What has traditionally been the prerogative of the head of the family, typically male, in exercising control over the family, subject to only minimal legal restraint, but also to societal and moral restraint, has come more often within the purview of legal sanctions: acts of violence within the family, especially against women, are reported by victims more readily, and authorities are more willing to act on such information.

16. Women have made significant gains in terms of legal rights as well as de facto equalization of opportunities. The situation of women, in being able to exercise more fully their recognized rights, in their participation in civic and political life, and in access to education and employment, has in many instances improved, sometimes significantly. At the same time, old abuses and injustices continue, there is often outright denial of opportunities outside the confines of the family, and women in general also face various subtle forms of discrimination. Conditions vary from place to place, with sharp contrasts not only among countries but also within countries. Thus, among the poorer strata with little formal education, especially in rural areas or the slums of big cities, the situation of women is particularly burdensome and women bear the brunt of injustices and exploitation. Survival strategies, for example, discriminate against women, a case in point being the withdrawal of girls from school before boys. Incomes of women are often pitifully low; worse, such incomes are often the sole support of children, although recently in some parts of the world women have been more successful than men in obtaining paid employment. The impact of old exploitative forms of work for women is being compounded by the expansion of such activities as sex tourism and child pornography, and the trafficking in women for indentured labour or prostitution, often organized by criminal networks and increasingly international in its scope, as described more fully below.

17. A feature of the past decade has been the series of retrograde steps taken by some authorities which have set back women's situation, as conventionally judged and reinforced by a series of international instruments on the subject. These retrograde measures have typically been justified by reference to alternative, typically "traditional" interpretations of the appropriate place of women in society and of the respective roles of women and men. This provides a particularly poignant example of the difficulties encountered in trying to reconcile universal values and cultural relativity.

18. The increase in the number and proportion of women with paid employment outside the home has given women a greater sense of economic security, independence and with it a greater measure of control over their lives. At the same time, the gains have come at a price, insofar as society has been slower to adjust in what is expected of women to carry out their traditional tasks even as they take up full-time paid employment. The so-called double-burden, outside employment and continued primary responsibility for household tasks and child-rearing, remains a central feature in the lives of women in most circumstances. In assessing whether the change in the overall situation of women in the world has been for the better or worse, as in the case of many social phenomena, there is no

simple adding of pluses and minuses which will produce a clear balance sheet subject to only a single interpretation.

19. Within the family but also and especially outside the family, children and young people as a group have fared relatively badly. Child poverty has risen even in many developed countries and countries with economies in transition where it had been much reduced over previous decades as a result of both high levels of employment and social provision in terms of universal access to free basic services and various subventions to families, especially large families. In developing countries, the situation remains in many respects critical, with the incidence of poverty among children rapidly increasing. With the exception of upper- and middle-income families, children of a large family are most likely to be in poverty. Many are employed in unhealthy and demanding conditions at very low pay to supplement the family income. Globally, some 120 million children under the age of 15 are estimated to be in full-time work. Some 130 million more work part time. Others, in increasing numbers, are forced out by destitute families, are abandoned or run away from home, leading a precarious existence, often as street children.

20. The proportion of children under 15 in the total population has been falling in both the developed and developing countries but remains high in the latter group, where it is now about one third as against less than one fifth in the former. As these proportions fall further, some lessening of the pressures on the average family may be expected. At the same time, as family size and proportion of children in the total population fall, the large family will be even more closely associated with poverty. At a regional level, this can be seen in the data for Africa, which has the lowest regional per capita income as well as the highest proportion of children under 15, namely 43 per cent, and this figure is projected to decline only modestly, to 40 per cent, by 2010.

21. While poverty and lack of opportunity are and will continue to be the lot of a large, possibly major, proportion of the world's children, the standard of living and prospects for the future of others are better than ever. Contrasts within countries, most visible in developing countries but to be observed also in developed countries, will remain stark and are more likely than not to widen in the near future. Equally significant but with different implications is the gulf that is expected to widen in their prospects in developed as against developing countries.

22. Similarly, young people in the age range 15-24 are facing very different futures depending on where and into what family they were born. In developed countries, the vast majority of young persons enjoy unprecedented freedom, command over purchasing power, educational opportunities and the prospect of rewarding work; a lesser number, mainly from poorer or immigrant backgrounds or from ethnic or other discriminated against groups, face a bleaker future. In developing countries, many or most young people face a bleak future, one that can be most succinctly characterized as the mirror image of that of the majority of youth in the more developed countries. The future for African youth appears especially difficult.

23. In the developed countries, the ancient scourge of poverty in old age has been largely defeated by State-provided or assured pensions and access to free basic social and social welfare services. Alienation or loneliness, on the one hand, and periods (possibly prolonged) of physical dependence on the other, are the new problems facing older persons (and their relatives), while communities have to cope with rising costs of medical care and various other costs associated with extended life. These countries where older persons make up a much larger share of the population (currently 20 per cent and expected to increase to 26 per cent by 2020) face many new challenges, including the reform of public pension systems so that they can meet the expectations and needs of current as well as future retirees, and are appropriate and sustainable for societies facing very different economic and demographic circumstances than those pertaining when the current systems were brought into being. A different but equally important challenge is how to make use of the skills, wisdom and talents of older persons for the benefit of society at large.

24. Older persons make up a relatively modest proportion of the total population of developing countries (8 per cent 60 years and over) but their number and importance in the total is rising rapidly (in 1960, it was 6 per cent and it is expected to increase to 11 per cent by 2020). For the majority of the population of developing countries, the more important challenge is to safeguard and shore up, where possible, the family and the community, and to provide a framework for older persons to continue to play a useful and productive role in society while building a

system of income security and support for those no longer capable of independent living.

25. In both developing and developed countries, inter-generational links continue to be strong and inter-generational solidarity much in evidence. At the same time, there are signs also of potential conflict, or of the different age groups drifting apart, with as yet unforeseeable consequences.

26. Disability, while prevalent among very old persons, is also present in all age groups. Globally, the number of persons with a disability is very large, somewhere in the region of 600 million (although there is and probably never will be an agreed definition of who should be counted). In recent years, various factors have contributed to an increase in the incidence of disability, including illness, accident and armed conflict. Attitudes to persons with a disability have ranged from hostility to tolerance to compassion. Although in some quarters disability is still seen as a stigma, the more common view now is that disability is something to be coped with or to be overcome, an endeavour to be shared by the person with a disability and society at large. Accommodation to the various needs of persons with a disability is increasingly seen as an important societal value.

27. In many spheres of life, the contribution of civil society organizations has become more important in recent years, especially in developing countries as well as countries with economies in transition, where such organizations have come into being relatively recently as major new players but with their role not always clearly defined. The boundaries of civil society, often blurred, embrace activities of numerous organized as well as informal groups, united, however, by a common interest which is not adequately served by for-profit private entrepreneurial concerns or government at the local or national levels.

28. Several broad trends in the role of civil society organizations may be noted. Important traditional actors, such as trade unions, have seen a diminution of their influence, most notably in their membership worldwide. At the same time, various forms of cooperative organization have increased their membership, and the range of activities coming within their scope has similarly expanded.

29. In developing countries, many new civil society groups have come into being promoting specific causes, as well as more formally structured NGOs, inspired in some instances by the prospect of funding from abroad. A similar trend may be observed in countries in transition. Their experience in meeting the goals for which they were set up has been mixed, however. But there is no question that the importance of not-for-profit organizations of various kinds in different parts of the world is on the increase, quantitatively at least, and that the scope of their activities is expanding and membership, as already mentioned for example in the cooperative movement, growing . While globally the membership of traditional trade unions is shrinking, it is expanding in some Asian and Latin American countries, where political change combined with rapid growth in key industrial sectors have made it easier for unions to organize and attract new members.

30. In parallel with changes in civil society and the "market", important changes may be noted also in the functioning of government at various levels in many countries, in the scope of government activities, the manner in which Governments perform their basic functions and their accountability to citizens.

31. Looking at the world political map in this, the early months of the new century, it is difficult to take in the changes that have occurred in the half century or so since the founding of the United Nations. It has been a half century dominated by a process of decolonization that is probably unprecedented in modern history, coinciding with a process of nation-building or rebuilding. One consequence of both processes was to facilitate the rise of strong, centralized government and tolerance of various forms of one-party or authoritarian government, justified in the name of holding together disparate communities in new nations and mobilizing resources for the development effort.

32. The last decade has seen the end of decolonization and the democratic legitimization of regimes through multi-party elections, adherence by their Governments to international human rights instruments and other manifestations of rejection of authoritarian forms of governance. It has also seen the break-up of several major countries. A further drama has unfolded in some countries which retained their territorial integrity but experimented with various forms of devolution, including constitutional changes providing for greater regional or local autonomy, sometimes initiated in response to or to forestall secessionist movements. On a different plane, the last

decade also saw voluntary ceding of national sovereignty to supranational bodies (as in the European Union and some other regional and global cooperative arrangements), as well as new challenges to the previously taken for granted supremacy of national sovereignty, especially in the area of civil and political rights. Decentralization of administration has been another theme of significance, in line with a broader move to reduce various forms of regulation, control and bureaucratic obstacles to initiatives by citizens and corporations, a tendency, when applied to international transactions, typically described as globalization.

33. Another characteristic of the last decade has been the search for new ways in which to meet social needs, including the provision, delivery and financing of social services in countries in all regions: reform of the welfare state in developed countries, a revised social agenda following the collapse of the system of State provision in countries in transition, and a new interest in social "safety nets" in developing countries suffering economic setbacks engendered by financial volatility (as in East Asia) or undergoing fundamental structural change (as in Latin America and elsewhere), or experiencing long periods of stagnation and even economic regress (as in Africa).

34. Fundamental change in the management and direction of the economy is another salient feature of recent years, most dramatically to be seen in the total transformation of former centrally planned economies into market-oriented economies. Equally significant is the global spread of market-oriented approaches to economic policy characterized by deregulation, the reigning in of direct involvement by government in the productive process, tighter control over public spending with reduced or even eliminated public sector fiscal deficits and virtual completion of the process of privatization of publicly owned industries including basic utilities. It is not possible to foresee what the long-term impact of these vast changes will be on economic performance, let alone who the gainers and losers will be. In the short-term, however, those who bore the main burden of change have generally been those least able to do so.

35. These developments in the management of the economy are reflected in the latest trends in public finances, particularly in the level and direction of public spending and overall fiscal balances. One dominant feature of public expenditure is the wide dispersion of spending in relation to the gross domestic product (from between about 20 per cent to 50 per cent or more) in countries with similar levels of per capita income or similar structural characteristics. But spending by central government as a proportion of gross domestic product (GDP) continues to be much greater in the developed countries than that in developing countries, and this has not changed over recent years and indeed decades.

36. Of particular significance has been the change in the direction of public spending by purpose. In developed countries, it is noteworthy that defence spending fell as a proportion of GDP from about 4 per cent in the early 1970s to about half that, or 2 per cent, in the late 1990s. In contrast, spending on social security and welfare increased by about one half in relation to GDP, from almost 9 per cent to over 13 per cent, and on health care from two and a half per cent to three and a half per cent; education spending by central government on the other hand remained more or less constant, at about 3 per cent of GDP. In developing countries, spending on defence rose slightly in the 1970s and 1980s but fell back again to the early 1970s level of about two and a half per cent of GDP. Social security and welfare spending increased from under 2 per cent to 3 per cent, that on health care from just over 1 per cent to almost 2 per cent, while education spending remained roughly constant at around three and a half per cent of GDP. The data are for central government spending only, while in some countries, state, provincial and local governments have major responsibilities for education, health and welfare; in federal states in particular, education spending by the latter exceeds that of central government several times and health spending is also substantial. Therefore, the public spending in these areas tends to be underestimated by these figures; however, the trend over time remains instructive.

III. Trends in living conditions: a mixed record of achievement

37. Work is at the centre of the life experience of most adults and even many children. It is most people's measure of their contribution to the economy and of their claims on its output of goods and services. The nature of work people do and the value the community ascribes to it tend to determine an individual's and family's social status. As economic activity expands, economic structures become more complex and

occupational tasks more specialized, people's employment, second only to their family circumstances, shapes personal relations and offers them a defined place in the community.

38. Four areas of work are noteworthy and important changes have occurred over recent years in each: the quantity of work available, the terms on which the work is offered, the incomes or livelihoods that it provides, and the security of both the employment available and the income derived directly or indirectly from it.

39. In developed countries, the vast majority of people who work are employed for a wage or salary, self-employment having steadily fallen although it has revived somewhat in recent years. Providing an economic environment that generates all the jobs necessary to employ all those seeking work, while at the same time meeting other macro-objectives, including productivity growth and low inflation, has been a central challenge for Governments. The higher importance being now accorded to full or high levels of employment contrasts with the policy stances of the 1970s and 1980s. Unemployment in North America has fallen to about 4 per cent, while that in the European Union hovers at about 10 per cent, being particularly high in the larger economies in continental Europe. While generally lower in recent years, unemployment rates have remained mainly above levels prevailing before 1975.

40. Five trends in employment patterns and unemployment may be noted. Long-term unemployment remains a major social problem. It persists especially where entire industries which were highly concentrated in particular geographic areas have contracted, leaving unemployed large numbers of relatively immobile skilled and semi-skilled middle-aged and older workers with few alternative work opportunities. Finding work for young people without the social or work skills for entry-level jobs remains a problem despite many schemes to tackle it. Minority young males face the bleakest prospects of employment. There has been a long-standing trend towards people leaving the full-time labour force at a younger age, partly involuntarily but more often voluntarily for those who can look forward to economic security in retirement and have the skills suitable for supplementing their pension with part-time or casual work. In all countries women make up a higher proportion of the paid workforce than before; indeed, the near parity in numbers of women in the labour force in many developed countries amounts to a social revolution. Finally, where overall the unemployment level remains high, there exist nevertheless both shortages of particular skills and vacancies in types of work citizens prefer not to take up; both kinds are now more often than not filled by immigrant labour.

41. Very special circumstance face workers in the countries with economies in transition as they adjust from a regime of guaranteed employment to uncertain labour-market conditions affected by economic restructuring and privatization. Unemployment levels show a wide variation across these countries, reflecting partly the stage that respective countries have reached in carrying out economic reforms and partly different social policies aimed at easing the transition. Large-scale unemployment has been generally avoided but many workers have had their pay delayed or eaten away by inflation and job insecurity has become a new feature of life for the majority of the population, particularly for women.

42. In developing countries which have experienced rapid economic growth, employment has expanded at rates above the rate of increase in the labour force, especially in East Asia. In some, paid employment now represents an important segment of their economies. Consequently, the financial crisis in the late 1990s resulted in a heavy toll in open unemployment.

43. In Africa, where the proportion of the labour force in full time employment is low, open unemployment is typically an urban phenomenon concentrated in a limited number of population groups, such as school-leavers. At the very time when large numbers of young people were coming onto the labour market, economies were growing only slowly or even contracting. The employment situation was further aggravated by the cutbacks in public-sector employment that often accompanied stabilization and longer-term restructuring efforts. A similar phenomenon was experienced in the Latin American and Caribbean region, where there was significant open urban unemployment, coexisting with a large employed population.

44. The vast majority of workers in developing countries continue to seek a living in the many different activities that make up the informal economy, or continue to derive their living from agriculture. As a

measure of its size, in a global workforce estimated about 3 billion, between 750 million and 1 billion are estimated as underemployed, largely in the informal sector and in subsistence agriculture in developing countries.

45. The principal characteristics of such "employment" are its precarious nature, low productivity and hence very low incomes. Economic precariousness is often accompanied by harassment from extortionists and criminal gangs, as well as the authorities in many instances. A different type of precariousness has afflicted employees in countries with economies in transition, which have gone from one extreme of almost total job security to insecurity, complicated by insecurity in respect of a whole range of social benefits that had earlier been based on the workplace. Moreover, in some countries pay has become intermittent and sporadic, with wages being also often paid in kind for later barter.

46. Working conditions in countries with economies in transition continue to be poor, with a high rate of accidents and incidence of occupational health problems. A similar situation pertains in most developing countries, although efforts are being made to improve conditions, particularly in highly "visible" sectors. However, outright exploitation of workers continues to be a major issue in many countries, affecting workers in so called "sweat-shops", including young women and children, often working in the export sector and in service, who have little protection from the authorities. As long as there is a steady stream of people willing to work in poor conditions for very low pay, the prospects of those currently exploited at work are not likely to improve in the near future, although some employers have recognized that better conditions and better pay often lead to higher productivity, with gains for workers and employers. In the meantime, agitation for improved labour conditions surfaces from time to time, with a mixed record of support from authorities and limited success. Sweat-shop working conditions are also in evidence in developed countries, especially among immigrant populations, both legal and illegal; the extent of the problems appears to have increased in recent years.

47. Wage disparities, and more generally income disparities, already very large, have dramatically increased in many countries in the past decade. In many developing countries and in countries with economies in transition, wages have fallen in real terms, while in developed countries the wages of the unskilled, and in some cases also median incomes, have stagnated or crept up only slowly. Where income disparities have increased most sharply, there has been stagnation or decline in the incomes of the lower-paid (including those in the informal sector) and a simultaneous very sharp increase in the incomes of those already high up on the income scale. At the same time, insofar as the data can be relied on, there has been much reshuffling of positions in the income ranges in between the worst-off and the best-off, that is, the middle ranges, yielding a rather mixed and complicated pattern, differing from country to country, for specific local, structural as well as policy causes.

48. How incomes end up being distributed across different income recipients is a final outcome of processes that are complex, often rooted in history and the socio-political structure of a society as well as current economic, demographic and political processes; developments in other countries with which the society is bound through a web of relations also play a role. There is usually a particular, unique explanation for any country's current personal income distribution. One implication is that different policy intervention will be needed if the objective is to change that distribution in a particular direction. Another implication is that there is frequently no agreement as to the extent to which an existing distribution may be considered inequitable, and which policies might be effective and implementable to make it more equitable.

49. Data for income distribution are often unreliable — although their scope and quality has been improving — and this makes it hazardous to draw general conclusions about the direction in which distribution has been moving and the factors behind the observed (or more likely estimated or deduced) changes. Nevertheless, it is evident that in the past two decades the dominant trend has been towards greater inequality — in some cases very noticeable — but there are also contrary examples. A trend towards greater equality was observed (although based on less reliable statistics) for the period from the 1950s to the 1970s, but again there were many contrary experiences in that period.

50. The growing perception of increasing income disparities, as well as the sharp increase in the number of people in poverty, particularly in Africa, in countries with economies in transition and in Asian countries which had done well previously but regressed as a

direct result of the recent financial crisis, have prompted renewed debate about their consequences for social cohesion and stability and have in some quarters lead to a re-examination of current economic and social policy.

51. Hunger now generally goes hand in hand with poverty, lack of income to purchase food being the main cause of hunger and undernutrition or malnutrition, except where food for own consumption remains the mainstay of family food supplies, which, however, now concerns only as few as between 5 and 10 per cent of the rural population of developing countries.

52. Lack of food supplies at the global level has long ceased to be a major factor in world hunger and undernutrition. At the same time, at the local level, the use of food denial as a political weapon and crop failure due to natural and man-made disasters continue to be important causes of hunger and starvation, as are collapsed distribution systems, despite the much better preparedness and logistic capacity for intervention by national and international humanitarian or relief agencies. Such local factors have grown in importance in recent years.

53. Hunger and poverty go hand in hand also in that the calculation of poverty is statistically related to estimates of hunger. Global estimates of poverty are rooted in a calculation of the income required to purchase the food to obtain a minimum level of caloric intake, while the latter is based on surveys of actual caloric intake. The considerable discrepancy in the estimates of the number of persons worldwide in hunger (about 800 million) and the extent of global poverty (at some 1.2 billion) shows the tenuousness of the estimates. Also, as such estimates are made only at intervals of several years and the methodology changes in the interval, it is not surprising that there can be and often is much disagreement as to the direction in which global hunger (and poverty) are moving, and whether indeed there is progress or regress in coping with this entrenched problem.

54. Available estimates of the extent of hunger show different trends in different regions and countries. The general trend was favourable in the Asia and Pacific region, the proportion of undernourished population declining substantially in the last two decades. Major gains were recorded also in North Africa and the Middle East, while only minor gains were recorded in sub-Saharan Africa. The Latin American and Caribbean region had a mixed record, with eight countries for which data are available making progress and a further 16 countries losing ground.

55. Insofar as there is a close relationship between the level of income and extent of hunger, growing income disparities at the country level, particularly with stagnating or declining incomes among low-income earners, disparities in nutritional levels within countries must have risen substantially; these were only partially compensated for by special programmes to provide subsidized or free food to the poor, and other special programmes to improve nutrition among children and other vulnerable groups, or segments of the population with special needs.

56. Advances in biotechnology are the most recent and potentially far-reaching but controversial — development that will help to shape the future regarding how much food will be produced, at what cost, who will produce it, and who will have access to it and on what terms and with what potential health and environmental hazards.

57. People's health status at the global level has improved as measured by such indicators as infant or under-5 mortality, maternal mortality, life expectancy and greater prevalence of longevity, but with some local and important exceptions. In sub-Saharan Africa and the countries of the former USSR, for example, the health situation has deteriorated markedly as measured on a wide range of health indicators.

58. The infant mortality rate has fallen from 26 per 1,000 to 9 per 1,000 between 1970 and 2000 in developed regions, and from 115 to 63 in developing regions (from 140 to 93 in sub-Saharan Africa); the existing gap in favour of the more developed regions thus increased still further. No developed country has an infant mortality rate now exceeding 35 per 1,000, while almost twice as many developing countries — 62 per cent — do. In the case of mortality levels for the under-5s, the comparable figures — 45 or more per 1,000 — are zero and 61 per cent. In the case of maternal mortality, 71 per cent of more developed countries and only 6 per cent of less developed countries record a ratio of less than 30. Life expectancy at birth increased from 68 years to 75 years in developed regions, and from 52 to 63 years in the less developed regions, in this case showing a clear narrowing of the gap between the two regions.

59. A number of diseases affecting large numbers of people continue to dominate the global health picture. Some diseases which had been earlier largely brought under control in many countries have seen a recent resurgence, partly due to worsening sanitary conditions, poor housing, overcrowding and inadequate diet, as well as failures in the health-care system, in preventive measures and in some instance new resistance to drugs. Malaria is a striking example of a resurgent disease, which now affects nearly 300 million people, with a death toll of more than 1 million annually, largely in sub-Saharan Africa. The incidence of this disease declined steadily in the last century, reaching its low point around 1970, since then it has risen rapidly.

60. Viewed over the long term, there has been a remarkable change in the causes of death at the global level. The leading causes of death now are cardiovascular diseases and cancer, accounting for 30 per cent and 23 per cent of mortality, respectively; at the beginning of the 1900s their combined impact was a mere 15 per cent, at a time when respiratory diseases (at 20 per cent) and other infectious diseases (at 13 per cent) were the leading causes of death.

61. The global pattern that is evolving is this: new epidemics are emerging while traditional health problems persist. Non-communicable diseases — the newer causes of death — now account for about 43 per cent of all deaths, 39 per cent in developing and as much as 81 per cent in developed countries. Within this category, neuropsychotic problems (10 per cent in developing and 23 per cent in developed countries), cardiovascular diseases (10 per cent and 18 per cent) and cancers (5 per cent and 15 per cent) are most prominent, followed by death due to injuries, caused especially by traffic accidents. At the global level, the "disease burden" on society of traffic accidents, taking into account both disablement and premature death, is calculated by the World Health Organization (WHO) to be in the region of 16 per cent of the total burden, with the burden of neuropsychotic problems, in second place, put at 10 per cent. Communicable diseases and other infections, as well as maternal and child ill-health and disability, the traditional diseases, continue to be important, especially in developing countries. Deaths from HIV/AIDS alone now account for 14 million, with currently 33 million worldwide infected with HIV. Of the 4 million premature deaths annually attributed to smoking, the vast majority occur in developing countries.

62. Developing countries are now facing an unprecedented situation: they are acquiring the diseases of the more developed countries while not having successfully contained the traditional diseases, and are thus confronted with a double challenge which most of them are not in a position to meet given the resources available and inadequacy of their health-care infrastructure.

63. The proliferation of business travel, tourism and migration, the expanding interchange of food products between countries and continents, and the increased transmission of virulent diseases such as influenza, AIDS and malaria, is creating enormous challenges for health services not only in developing but also in developed countries. The need for rapid exchange of health information and medical resources (doctors and technology) is becoming more obvious and necessary. The communications revolution at the same time provides for improved communications both within national borders and internationally with respect to epidemiological surveying, prevention, surveillance, intervention, monitoring and control of disease transmission. Effective approaches will increasingly depend on a true globalization of health in all of its multiple dimensions.

64. Just as the health gap (and even more starkly the health-care gap) between the developed and developing countries is large, health conditions within countries vary significantly among income groups and by gender. WHO estimates show that in developing countries, the ratio of the probability of dying in the age group 15-59 between poor and non-poor (as locally defined) is 2.2 for men and 4.3 for women; corresponding estimates for the 0-5 age group are 4.3 and 4.8. The incidence of tuberculosis among people in poverty is 2.6 times greater than among people not living in poverty. There are differences also in developed countries in the health status of different income and social groups. As a rule, however, with comprehensive health-care systems, rapidly rising expenditure on health care subsidized or financed from public resources and steady increase in the general level of health, differences are increasingly due to factors unconnected with differential access to health care (with the notable exception of a few of the richest countries). In developing countries, in contrast, the disparities remain very large, given the typically inadequate capacity of public systems to provide even

basic care, which has been further eroded in recent years in countries least well equipped to cope.

65. The ability to provide access to safe water, on which health (as well as productive capacity) depends, remains elusive in developing countries, with the majority of the population lacking access in about one quarter of countries. The situation is still worse in respect of adequate sanitation, with one third of developing countries unable to provide access to the majority of the population. Based on population rather than numbers of countries, 25 per cent lack access to safe water, while 50 per cent lack access to sanitation.

66. Differences in available space and quality of dwellings are probably the most dramatic manifestations of living standard disparities between the upper and lower income strata and between the average income recipients in more developed as against developing countries.

67. In the urban dichotomy of two cities, of the rich and of the poor, the gap continues to widen. Rapid urbanization and demographic changes are reshaping housing needs. While in most developed countries adequate housing is by and large available to most people, as also in countries with economies in transition but with lower average standards and quality, developing countries have not succeeded in making decent housing widely available. Overcrowding, poor quality housing and lack of adequate water and sanitation, especially in the growing number of informal settlements, predominate and pose health, safety and environmental hazards. Homelessness, endemic in developing countries and recently on the rise in developed countries, has added to social polarization and tension in urban areas.

68. The findings from the United Nations housing indicators programme confirm that countries with higher per capita income have larger and better quality of housing as well as better water and sanitation provision. For all indicators — floor area per person, persons per room, percentage of permanent structure and percentage of housing units with water connection to their plot — there is a wide gap between income groups within countries and across countries. Housing in high-income countries is also generally better built than in low-income countries. Among the lowest income groups, housing is far below standard, informal and often unauthorized.

69. Housing provides a particularly important example of market failure on a large scale through the difficulty of allocating resources in ways that meet equitably a basic social need. And yet, while some efforts to compensate for market failure by public intervention have proved successful, others have not and some have made the situation worse.

70. The basic dilemma faced by societies, now as in the past, most particularly in urban areas, is that inhabitants with different economic functions and very different earning capacity but who are nevertheless dependent on each other compete on highly unequal terms for limited space and against alternative commercial and public use. The market outcome has typically resulted in overcrowding of the poor, or their being pushed out to the peripheries of cities that require long journeys to work on inadequate public transport or use of expensive private alternatives. In developed countries, various forms of public subsidy or public housing have been attempted, often with marked success but also unforeseen difficulties over the longer run. Retreat from public support of affordable housing for the less well-off has more recently contributed to the increase in poverty and homelessness.

71. In developing countries, the rapid growth of cities has meant that the provision of adequate housing has not kept pace with the need for it. While the better-off have typically been able to secure appropriate housing, the poor have been squeezed in various ways. Those able to get a foothold in shanty towns or squatter settlements on first arrival in urban areas had to endure a precarious existence, with no security (or services) even when able to afford ad hoc improvements to the shelters they occupied. Further problems have been created when urban authorities cleared such settlements for subsequent commercial use or high-income housing.

72. A distinct feature of housing viewed from a social or equity perspective is that economic prosperity tends to have a negative impact on the housing of poor people insofar as they are forced to compete with people who can afford rising prices, as buyers or renters, crowding the poor out of affordable housing. Moreover, in all countries, mobility and flexibility in responding to new employment opportunities requires an active housing market, for rent or purchase, with a range of accommodation of different size and price to meet the various needs of individuals and families of various size and incomes. In many countries, rich and

poor, these conditions are not being met. Open and hidden discrimination when it comes to the sale, renting and allocation of public housing presents yet another formidable obstacle to millions of people, an obstacle that is often the very last to be moved aside.

IV. Social pathologies

73. At the end of the cold war, the hope of a world without wars, in which conflicts between and within nations are peacefully resolved, has not yet been realized. According to the Department of Peace ad Conflict Research of Uppsala University in Sweden, during the decade ending in 1997 there were 103 armed conflicts in 69 locations around the world, in 1998 there were 27 conflicts in 26 locations, and in 1999 there were 36 conflicts.

74. While armed conflicts have not diminished, there has been a change in their pattern, the majority of which now take place mainly within States. They are usually fought not only by regular armies but also by militias and armed civilians with little discipline. A particularly disturbing feature is the great number of children actively involved in hostilities. The fighting in most of these conflicts has tended to be intermittent with varying and fluctuating intensity. Many of the conflicts have brought about the virtual collapse of organized government, the collapse of such institutions of the State as the policy and judiciary, the breakdown of order, an increase in banditry and in many cases the destruction or looting of State assets.

75. In some armed conflicts, the use of simple, domestically produced, weapons has predominated, but mainly the combatants have been well supplied by imported arms, which seem to have been readily obtainable for hard currency or barter for local commodities.

76. The cost in terms of loss of human life and economic, political and social disintegration has been massive. In the past decade, over four million people are estimated to have been killed in the various conflicts; most were non-combatants. One million people have been victims of the 120 million landmines that were buried in over 70 countries. Other long-term effects on people have been noted: extensive emotional and psychosocial stress; mental illness; a sense of insecurity, especially for women and children; displacement and exile; and lost education opportunities.

77. Internal conflicts typically involve secessionist movements or groups seeking to gain power by military means. Another major factor underlying conflicts has been the inability of many Governments to guarantee basic order and protection to their populations and their inability to contain minor conflicts and prevent them from developing into bigger ones. Countries that have been particularly afflicted by armed conflicts typically suffer from inequality among social groups, based on such factors as ethnicity, religion, national identity or economic class, reflected in unequal access to political power that forecloses paths to peaceful change.

78. Discrimination continues to be pervasive and to take many forms. While it is often harmless, more an inconvenience than anything worse, it can and has exhibited virulent forms, effectively barring some groups from full participation in the economy and society, or compelling them to participate on unfavourable terms. Frequently, and in various ways, it has erupted into violence. The consequences have been particularly dangerous when the resulting violence is not condemned by authority or, indeed, when authority condones overt discrimination.

79. Every one discriminates and cannot avoid doing so. People favour those who meet their needs, who resemble them most, who are seen as attractive in some sense. Whoever is in power has typically defined reality, usually ascribing a higher value to his or her own attributes or characteristics and inferior or subservient status to others. In extreme cases, a polarization ensues between "us and them", with pride turning into prejudice, patriotism into chauvinism, defence into attack and violence. Group solidarity's other side is often group exclusivity. Over time, many forms of prejudice that have in the past lead to open discrimination have diminished with the general rise in education. Familiarity has tended to attenuate discrimination. But there have been many situations recently where these norms have quite clearly not operated.

80. Another newer trend to be observed is that discrimination is less likely to be supported by authorities. Few Governments now openly contest the validity of international conventions and other instruments relating to discrimination against women, older persons or ethnic, linguistic and religious groups.

Their provisions are increasingly being incorporated into national laws and more countries have in the recent past ratified the various instruments. Grievance mechanisms or redress procedures have also been put in places; in many instances, they provide a useful recourse procedure against wrongs perpetrated.

81. A related development has been the spread of awareness among groups discriminated against, their less ready acceptance of their fate and a greater capacity for organizing in defence of their cause. In some cases — for example of that of persons with a disability — a measure of success has resulted. However, in some instances, vigorous advocacy has produced counter-reactions and at times has incited greater hostility against the target groups.

82. Violence (besides that arising from armed conflict) has always been an affliction of societies and it is difficult to assess whether such violence has recently been diminishing or increasing at a global level. What is clear is that attitudes toward violence in general and toward particular forms of violence especially have been changing. There is less tolerance and acceptance of it and barriers are being erected against violence, *inter alia,* within the framework of agreed human rights.

83. The criminalization of violence, focusing first on communal forms, is being extended to the private domain, marking an important shift in where societies draw the dividing line between the private and the public domains. Thus, violence against vulnerable members of the family and women in particular has been increasingly recognized as a criminal act. At the same time, this change has varied in intensity and depth from society to society, with domestic violence still seen in some quarters as a private matter, legitimized by cultural norms.

84. Violence has been on the increase in countries that have undergone major upheavals, such as serious economic, political or social dislocations, especially when this has involved confrontation between different value systems. A strong correlation may be observed also between such factors and the increase in violence against women and various forms of domestic violence.

85. Violence against women in both the public and domestic domains persists despite important gains made by women in many spheres of life. Even in societies where domestic violence against women has been criminalized, much remains to be done before it is eradicated. Girls and young women continue to be especially vulnerable to abuse by parents, adult caregivers, acquaintances, husbands and male friends. The incidence of violence or sexual assaults against women with a disability is particularly prevalent. Rape has been increasing in many parts of the world. Violence against women also continues to be widely practised by parties to armed conflict. Migrant women are also particularly prone to violent acts. The levels of trafficking in women have reached major proportions and are currently estimated to be in the range of 1 to 2 million per year.

86. Prostitution is globally on the increase. The majority of prostitutes seem to be coerced or deceived into prostitution. A large proportion of prostitutes have themselves been subject to sexual abuse in childhood. Since prostitution, even when tolerated socially, operates largely outside the law, prostitutes continually endure physical and sexual violence and their "handlers" typically prevent those who wish to escape prostitution from being able to do so. Most prostitutes come from poor backgrounds, as many as 90 per cent in developing countries, while the financial turnover of the "sex sector" is large and growing in many parts of the world.

87. Over the past decade there has been a marked increase in reported violence against children. According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), in the course of armed conflicts in the 1990s, up to 2 million children were killed, 6 million injured or disabled, 1 million orphaned and 15 million displaced. Sexual abuse has become widespread, with child trafficking also on the increase. The practice of selling children into servitude or prostitution continues in poor countries despite efforts to curb it. Between 15 and 30 million children live on the streets of major metropolitan areas, with their numbers growing, and face exploitation and violence at the hands of the public and in many cases even of the authorities. The increased consumption of illicit substances by children and youth, induced by adults, represents a new and growing form of violence. More than 50 million children work under hazardous conditions and are subject to physical abuse by their masters.

88. Corruption, which is age-old, has recently attracted renewed attention and has assumed a central place in the international agenda. It seems to be on the increase as a global phenomenon, although it is not easy to document this for the obvious reason that it is

not readily admitted, but also because it takes many forms and some practices which are considered corrupt in one place are not considered to be corrupt in another.

89. The new scrutiny to which corruption has recently been subjected derives from several developments. In the context of economic liberalization and increase in transborder transactions of various kinds, including financial flows, lending, trade in services and ownership, greater attention is being given to how different countries conduct their business, to their laws and regulations, accounting rules and tax codes, and to other aspects of their economic life. The clash of different business cultures and the insistence of outsiders to be assured of a "level playing field" when venturing into new markets have contributed, *inter alia*, to casting light on practices previously hidden or tacitly accepted.

90. With the new emphasis on the beneficial role of properly functioning markets for the allocation of resources and the promotion of economic efficiency and insistence on reforms to make Governments also function more effectively has come a new awareness that given the vast resources directly or indirectly controlled by public authorities, corruption which leads to the misallocation of resources represents potentially staggering losses to society.

91. There is also a new recognition of the fact that corruption typically hurts the ordinary person most, while often entrenching the already advantaged or the stronger and privileged. Seen as an important issue of equity in a world undergoing rapid change, it is also less tolerated by the public at large.

92. Organized crime has taken on monumental proportions in recent decades. Trafficking in humans, drugs and illegal firearms, as well as money-laundering, have burgeoned, creating a shadow economy that runs into the hundreds of billions of dollars. Profits from illegal trafficking in cocaine, heroin and cannabis, to cite one example, are estimated at a staggering $85 billion, while overall spending on drugs each year is estimated at $400 billion.

93. The global environment that enables the growth of legitimate multinational business and facilitates the freer movement of people, capital and goods across national borders has also provided unprecedented opportunity for criminals to organize themselves on a global scale. Traffickers of every description have benefited from the positive features of globalization, moving criminals and booty easily from country to country, stalking victims and recruits in new and ever-growing territory and investing profits in centres that offer secrecy and attractive returns. The negative aspects of globalization such as rising inequity, deepening social exclusion and marginalization of sections of poor populations have also worked to the advantage of criminals. Growing numbers of people, especially the poor and the young, in developing and developed countries alike, are becoming vulnerable to the lure of crime and the "highs" of criminal behaviour.

94. The Internet, a centre of globalization, is fast emerging as a key ally of organized crime networks. They have been able to move their money anywhere in the world with speed and ease and little danger of detection, thanks to rapid developments in financial information, technology and communication. "Megabyte money" (as symbols on a computer screen) can be moved scores of times to shake law enforcement officials off its trail. In addition, criminal organizations have been making full use of financial havens and offshore centres in the new global economy to launder their assets. Some estimates put the number of such "anonymous" corporations at more than one million worldwide, and the amount of laundered money as high as $500 billion a year.

95. The Internet is also a new tool for the old crime of trafficking in humans. The proliferation of web sites on pornography, sex predators and paedophiles, with "content" providers from around the world, attests to the transnational reach of criminal syndicates engaged in the sexual trafficking of women, girls and boys.

96. The changing nature of organized crime is providing a serious test of government and intergovernmental law enforcement agencies. Its sheer sophistication and complexity call for innovative forms of cooperation between Governments, intergovernmental agencies and non-government organizations on many levels. Above all, the explosive growth of organized crime raises fundamental questions of the role of state in ensuring social protection and human rights guarantees for the poor and marginalized.

97. While a variety of factors have contributed to the perceptible rise of organized crime worldwide, a global picture of conventional crimes (such as assault, homicide, robbery and other property offences) is harder to draw. In some developed countries, overall

trends in recorded crimes are reportedly on the increase, especially in the countries with economies in transition; in others, they are on the decline. Crime in major cities owes something to more efficient police work but also to the changing demographic profile. For the most part, first-generation immigrants — with the few exceptions who maintain criminal ties to their native countries — have tended to be law-abiding.

98. Global crime assessments have to be made with caution, bearing in mind that statistics typically reflect only crimes that are reported and therefore only a portion of actual crimes committed. Within countries, the picture may also vary considerably between rural and urban areas and major cities and depends on the development profile of each country. Other determinants also play a role, including the degree of credibility of the police and of the state as law enforcers and dispensers of justice, especially in the eyes of ethnic minorities and indigenous populations, and the willingness and ability of poor, illiterate, newly immigrant or elderly people to file complaints. These factors make straightforward comparisons within and between countries difficult. The United Nations surveys on crime trends and operations of criminal justice systems point to other problems, including differences in legal definitions of crimes and administrative procedures for counting, classification and disclosure.

V. Education, technology and information: commanding aspects of social change

99. Education has assumed a central role in the life of societies, and their general progress has become intimately bound up with the vitality and reach of the education enterprise, from the preschool to postdoctoral levels. At the global level, it has become the biggest "industry", absorbing 5 per cent of world GDP and generating or helping to generate much more.

100. The promotion of universal public education in an earlier era had as its principal aims — and these continue to be sought — nation-building and national integration, the spreading of shared values, assurances of a strong moral component, the socialization of children and the steering of young persons into assigned adult roles. What has come to the fore in recent decades and will assume still greater importance is the economic role of education, as it is increasingly the foundation of individual success and of society's prosperity. Education, in combination with research and technological innovation, is reshaping most aspects of life, and indeed is on the edge of reshaping life itself.

101. Education opens doors and facilitates social and economic mobility. But it also shuts off possibilities to the excluded and has in some circumstances played a divisive role as well between the better educated and less educated. Unequal access remains a feature of most education systems, however extensive, expressing itself in unequal duration of education for different social groups, particularly in the unequal quality of what is offered.

102. Universal primary and a high level of secondary enrolment have been achieved in most developed countries. Differences emerge in the number of pupils dropping out early or not going on to post-secondary education, and here there continues to be a relative high correspondence between low social status and early exit from the education system. While in these countries enrolment at secondary and tertiary levels has increased rapidly and Governments have made major efforts to encourage young people from less well-off homes to continue education, there remains a considerable gulf between social classes. Here, differences in quality play a critical role, with the available schooling at both primary level and secondary level typically inferior in areas serving poorer or minority populations. Parents with less education tend to give less importance to it and often pass these attitudes to their offspring. At the same time some communities, including immigrants in some instances or other minority groups, see education as their main hope of advancement and are seizing their opportunities.

103. Concern about the quality of schooling in general is common to all developed countries. This manifests itself in the frequent complaints from employers that the products of the education system are often unprepared for work; one estimate puts the resources devoted to remedial teaching and on-the-job training spent by employers at a level equal to the entire public education budget. The concern manifests itself also in frequent reference to the importance of education to maintaining a competitive edge in an increasingly knowledge-based and open world economy.

104. Both concerns have of course even greater force in most developing countries where educational opportunities are more restricted and typically more unequal and where what is available, particularly in rural areas and low-income communities, is very poor, with most school systems afflicted by overcrowding, few resources and poorly trained teachers, and further complicated by other problems of poor communities, such as children often being sick or undernourished and attending school sporadically.

105. Still, over the years, enrolment rates at the primary and even at the secondary levels have crept up toward rates prevalent in developed countries. The most glaring gap that is now emerging is between Africa and South Asia, on the one hand, and other developing regions on the other. In many developing countries, there is close to universal primary enrolment. Where the overall rate is still lagging, it is often mainly due to the very low enrolment of girls.

106. The goal of complete access for boys and girls to primary education is subscribed to by most developing countries. But the obstacles in practice to its attainment continue to be formidable. There is also a vigorous debate about the relative priority to be given to the different levels of education. The primary school and universal primary enrolment have an importance beyond mere "schooling". In the longer run and over several generations, they have demonstrated their critical importance to the transformation of societies and to what sociologists refer as the modernization process. At the same time, the more immediate economic imperatives have tended to point to the importance of expanding secondary and post-secondary education, which have indeed also been found necessary to the attainment of quality universal primary schooling. Enrolment increases at the primary level have in themselves generated pressure to expand the number of places available at higher levels; and indeed such pressure has been effective, partly by virtue of the fact that it has come from groups with more education, with a greater capacity to articulate their demands and often with better access to the authorities.

107. The school system is excellent in some developing countries and all countries have excellent schools. It is the prevalence of low standards in the bulk of the system in many countries that is troublesome and has not proved easy to remedy. While piecemeal innovations and reform may be observed throughout the various regions, education systems have been slow to change and tradition has weighed heavily. Inevitably, changes have also been slow in yielding results, and the fact that reforms, if they go wrong, cannot easily be reversed and may leave permanent damage has acted as a restraint on reform even though in many countries reform is urgently required.

108. While it is difficult to judge whether the quality of entire systems is improving or deteriorating, there is a broadly shared belief that education at the primary and often also the secondary level is not up to meeting the rapidly changing needs of most developing countries, in terms of skills taught and acquired, and preparation for work or for higher education. In some countries, conditions have certainly been deteriorating, in part because of more limited resources, although this is by no means the only or even main reason as the evidence suggests that expenditure per pupil is far from being the only important factor associated with education results obtained. Other factors have been important, social and cultural but it has proved more easy to identify poor outcomes than to explain their precise causes.

109. In addition to the quantitative and qualitative differences in educational attainment and education systems across countries, interpersonal differences within countries are large and in many developing countries arguably becoming larger. These countries will face a steadily mounting challenge by the divisions that unequal access to education will pose as educational attainment is becoming the dominant determinant of social status and economic prospects. Currently access to education offers the prospect of upward mobility to some; in this technology has made possible and is being used in some countries to provide opportunities to youth from rural or remote areas and poor families, for instance by what has come to be described as distance learning. But the more typical tendency seems to have been that the already educated and better off are able to consolidate their advantage through better access or skilful use of opportunities presented, distancing themselves further from other sections of their communities.

110. An unprecedented technological explosion of ways to communicate has resulted in many significant changes, including the lowering of production costs and productivity gains. The Internet has been instrumental in advancing the frontiers of knowledge and its effective application. From the perspective of

developing countries, the new "information revolution" represents an opportunity to access global information and knowledge and to harness them to facilitate and accelerate development.

111. In principle, the information revolution has the potential to create opportunities for both developing countries and disadvantaged and weaker sections of society everywhere to gain access to information resources that enable them to participate as players in the marketplace of the global economy. While universal and equitable access is critical in making information technologies an instrument of development, there are large disparities in access and gaps in Internet connection rates between rich and poor countries. Even among those who are getting connected to the network, the rate and quality of connection sites is uneven among and within countries.

112. As the communications revolution has increased the range of information flows and as economies are becoming increasingly dependent on knowledge and "know-how", economic growth is coming to be less constrained by physical scarcity while the control of knowledge (including access to it and the shaping of its content) is becoming less the province of elites and bureaucracies but is more widely distributed.

113. To date, the information revolution has produced inconclusive trends about the ways in which Internet usage will affect the global community and the development process in particular. At the heart of this matter is that two distinct approaches to information technology use may now be at odds with each other and compete for dominance. One is the commercialization of the Internet, buoyed by the private sector and influential actors who stand to profit from such activities, which will also contribute directly to economic growth. The other is the Internet as an instrument of social transformation. Because it is non-hierarchical and non-controlling, the Internet has shown its wide use can serve as a leveller, bringing to the table the previously excluded voices of those who may thus be fully heard and participate in the giving and receiving of knowledge. In this latter construction, the Internet would be a critical resource for thinking and knowing and a powerful tool for democratization.

114. Currently, both usages of the Internet and information technologies coexist. However, with varying rates of adoption across the world, the relative impact of the two types of usage across the range of countries is unclear at the present time. The consequences for societies due to selecting one or other of the two usages will at least partly be determined by the state of development of the countries under consideration and the relations among the actors involved within countries.

115. Information technology and associated developments have had a profound influence on how production is organized and consumer needs are met. More generally, technological innovations have been particularly important and extensive in the range of intermediate goods, materials, production processes, instrumentation, the use and application of memory chips, integrated circuits and other programmable control devices, with their attendant software. The most recent development of far-reaching significance has been the introduction of on-line dealing, electronic or so-called "e-commerce", above all in inter-company transactions.

116. In comparison with earlier periods, when an array of technology-driven new consumer items came to the market and their use spread rapidly from the better-off groups to the "man in the street", largely as a consequence of the possibility offered by mass production leading to falling prices per unit, fewer new consumer products have come on the market in recent years — although quality has been improving — and those that have are concentrated in a limited number of lines in electronics, telecommunications and products of the bio-medical and pharmaceutical industries

117. At the same time, the production of basic and common-use consumer products has been widely scattered, with a massive expansion in productive capacity in developing countries both for export and for the domestic market. The availability of household durable items, such as refrigerators, cookers, sewing machines, fans, radios, televisions, video-recorders, cameras, telephones, and personal computers, as well as bicycles, motorcycles and even private cars, has expanded several-fold in the space of some 10 years and their use is reaching further down the income scale. But while the middle-class, consumer lifestyle is now enjoyed by a greater number of people around the world, the contrast between this lifestyle and that of persons for whom it remains out of reach appears starker than ever and more clearly visible.

118. A lesson of the last decade in regard to the successful spread and application in developing

countries of "old" technologies and commercial exploitation of "new" technologies is that much more is required than "access" and a technologically literate population core. Supporting networks are also required, both technical and professional, as well as access to credit and venture capital, and support or at least acceptance of groups who might feel that their power or position is being challenged. The support of such groups, particularly elites, has been important, otherwise there has had to be a sufficient mass behind innovation to overcome vested opposition wishing to maintain the status quo. Immigrants, sometimes returning home, have in some countries been in the vanguard of successful change and entrepeneurship based on the exploitation of technological opportunities.

VI. Old issues, new challenges: equity and ethical implications

119. In chapter VI, the discussion focuses on the moral, ethical and distributive implications of five major developments: globalization and its social dimensions and equity implications; changing views on the role of government in promoting the common good; the shift from non-market to market approaches to meeting social needs; the change of boundaries between the private and public domains; and developments in the bio-medical sciences and their impact on the future shape of populations and societies. This section is more speculative than earlier sections. Questions are raised to which there may be no clear answers, at least not yet. No attempt is made to forecast what lies ahead or to lay down norms for what ought to be. Rather, questions are posed because they clearly require informed discussion, and that discussion may also help shape the future contours of the policy agenda for local, national and international action.

120. The discussion begins with a brief recapitulation of what is typically understood by "globalization". Both its quantitative and qualitative aspects are reviewed. Various aspects of globalization and their implications for the future shape of society are examined: (a) migration and travel; (b) the global reach of knowledge, technology, information, communications, mass media, and mass culture; (c) the transborder transmission and diffusion of ideas, values, norms and standards relating to both the public and the private domains; (d) the growing interdependence of the global economy by the enhanced movement of goods, services, capital, finance, expertise and labour; (e) the convergence of views on economic management, regulation and public-private relations; (f) economic groupings; (g) transnational corporations and concepts of corporate governance; and (h) transnational mechanisms of economic surveillance and management.

121. Bearing in mind the above, the following questions are raised. Do current developments lead toward greater cultural homogeneity? If so, what problems would this create? Is more homogeneity always bad? Is there a contradiction between universality (universal values) and cultural diversity? How can one arrive at an appropriate balance? Since globalization can take place under different regimes, what are the implications of more market-driven as against more non-market or planned regimes? Under what circumstances do levels of economic activity and economic structures converge or diverge? What is the effect on inequalities, among and within countries? What are the implications for structures and policies in the sociopolitical sphere of the need to comply with requirements of free trade or to ensure a level playing field for international economic transactions? What are the limitations placed on national sovereignty by the various processes of globalization (limitations voluntarily accepted and their consequences, such as in joining customs unions, other regional arrangements and international agreements and limitations imposed by circumstance, whether economic, technological, or political?) Who (individuals, groups, sectors, industries, regions or countries) gains from the processes of globalization and who loses under various "regimes"? What is gained and what is lost?

122. Following a brief description of trends in the size, scope and activities of government at different levels, there is a brief recapitulation of the debate on the proper role of government in its responsibility for promoting the "common good" and the various developments and forces that now drive the debate. The challenges faced by Governments in responding to new local and global circumstances in meeting citizen needs and to their evolving expectations of what government can deliver, are analysed from four perspectives: What is the most appropriate balance among the different roles of government — as provider, promoter, arbiter and regulator? At what level (local, regional, national, international) are different

functions of government best performed bearing in mind the often conflicting needs of efficiency in delivery and responsiveness to people's definition of their varied needs, and what are the advantages and disadvantages of organizing services on a centralized or decentralized basis? How can the different and changing concerns of diverse groups and interests in society be accommodated through governmental intervention? What partnerships are appropriate between government and other social actors in the new global circumstances?

123. A brief recapitulation of the issues involved and the views on the relative merits of market and non-market approaches to meeting social needs, particularly for ensuring that the basic needs of all are met, is followed by a review of how and why the pendulum has swung from favouring the one and then the other approach. The pendulum has clearly been moving toward market-based or quasi-market approaches, inspired, in large measure, by the argument that such approaches are both more efficient and make possible an allocation of resources more in line with the needs and wishes of the population. The following questions that need further debate and clarification are raised. What lies behind the efficiency argument? What role does ideology play? What is the impact of market failure on the outcome? Since the market approach reduces the scope and role of the political process in determining whose wishes are acted upon, whose needs are met, what is decided and who pays, and what is its impact, favourable or unfavourable, on different groups? What are the implications for the promotion of the "common good" and indeed for the definition of the common good?

124. Regarding the change of boundaries between the private and public domains, three different but closely related trends are examined briefly, pointing to their possible ethical as well as practical implications. The first trend concerns the apparent shift in the importance given to meeting individual as against collective needs and its consequences. The second trend concerns privacy and freedom from intrusion by public or private agents. While social surveillance, monitoring or "snooping" are in many respects socially useful, benefiting and protecting individuals, they can also be an unwarranted intrusion and an instrument of unacceptable social control. In this context, how has technology changed the balance between protecting people and controlling people and how is it affecting notions of the right to privacy? What is the impact on social behaviour, freedom of action, speech and autonomy of the enhanced technical capacity for surveillance of an individual's actions, movements, speech and political expression? The third trend concerns the conflict between privacy and confidentiality, on the one hand, and the economic and social importance of freely available information, its wide dissemination and easy access, on the other.

125. Discussion of developments in the bio-medical sciences focuses on bio-ethics of particular contemporary concern and why these are critical to the future shape of society. Variable cultural responses to the issues are discussed and the question posed: can universal ethics be consistent with cultural diversity?

126. The bio-ethical questions raised by four major new developments in bio-science and medicine are discussed, together with their different likely impact on different societies and different groups: the new genetics; the new reproductive technologies; transplantation; and the medical prolongation of life. The topic concludes with a brief discussion of bio-ethics in relation to social justice and human rights, and the likely impact of advances in bio-medicine on population trends, structures and related matters.